



SDMS Doc ID 2014575

Water inquiry move sought

PERCHLORATE: A senator wants a state board to take over an Inland contamination probe.

BY SHARON McNARY
THE PRESS ENTERPRISE

State Sen. Nell Soto on Friday accused the Santa Ana Regional Water Quality Control Board of holding secret, illegal talks about perchlorate contamination in Inland area wells and asked the board's parent agency to take over an investigation.

"While the Regional Board holds secret sessions, it is estimated that in my District there may be a 20 million gallon per day shortfall of drinking water," Soto, D-Pomona, wrote to Attorney General Bill Lockyer.

Soto's district includes areas of Bialto, Fontana and Colton where perchlorate has been detected in groundwater. Four water retailers have closed 19 wells after finding the chemical, which is used in the manufacture of rocket fuel, explosives and fireworks. It is believed to damage the thyroid.

Soto said she doubted the ability of the regional board to manage "a massive groundwater contamination crisis," and asked the California State Water Resources Control Board to assume investigation of perchlorate pollution in the San Bernardino Valley.

Santa Ana regional Board Executive Officer Gerard Thibeault said the perchlorate issue was his staff's highest priority and that it should remain under the regional board's jurisdiction.

"We'll be surprised if anyone has any good scientific rationale for moving this investigation to another jurisdiction," Thibeault said.

Soto also asked the state resources board to rescind the regional board's Sept. 13 vote lifting cleanup and abatement orders against Goodrich Corp and Kwikset Corp. The vote took place in a closed session that had not been advertised on the agenda.

The two companies were accused by the regional board of polluting groundwater in the vicinity of San Bernardino County's Mid-Valley Sanitary Landfill.

Regional board Chairwoman Carole Beswick said that deliberation of the issue in executive session following a daylong open hearing was inadvertently omitted from the board's agenda, and that she would be willing to rescind the board's vote and discuss the issue in public.

Thibeault said the regional board is permitted under law to deliberate enforcement actions in closed session and that the board's attorney properly announced the reasons for the session.

The Press Enterprise Sept. 21, 2002